



2014 CCE Summer Internships

CATEGORY ARCHIVES: ASSESSING POTENTIAL FOR SCALING UP FARM TO CAFETERIA IN SARATOGA AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES IN NEW YORK STATE

Week 4

Posted on **July 7, 2014** by **jl2895**

The majority of this week was devoted to wrapping up the collection of needs assessment surveys of public school districts in Saratoga County. On top of this, I interviewed Mark Miller of Skidmore Dining to learn more about their efforts of procuring local foods and sustainable dining projects, and compare private institutional procurement with public institutional procurement. Mr. Miller was very informative and passionate about using local foods in his menus, as evidenced by the plethora of projects he and his staff are working towards such as the Skidmore community garden and Real Food Challenge. After we talked, he brought me to see the Skidmore community garden and I was able to take several pictures of the growing crops.





After completing the collection of data, I spent the rest of the week compiling it and had all my results typed out so that I can begin writing my results and discussion for my report next week.

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Week 3

Posted on **July 3, 2014** by [jl2895](#)

This past week was incredibly packed with traveling to various school districts in Saratoga County and surveying each of these school districts. As each food service director of each school district filled out the survey, I found out that the major priority that they have is regarding the USDA regulations on school meals, rather than focusing on local foods.

I received a lot of concern over how unrealistic the new USDA regulations are and how much deficit they have accumulated because of their efforts to fulfill the regulations. It is evident that these food service directors have a passion to serve healthy foods for kids; their concern for the children they serve is unmistakable as they elaborate on the children's lack of interest that has been garnering the last few years because of the USDA regulations and how kids are bringing even more unhealthy foods to school as a consequence. One food service director was rather upset to tell me that one kid brought a tub of icing as his lunch. Another food service director was recounted with disbelief that students on free and reduced meals were opting out of school meals and not eating lunch at all.

It is a common misconception that food service directors care little about the nutritional value of the food they serve. This has been portrayed by the media in all sorts of mediums. However, after speaking and meeting with all these food service directors, I realized that this was definitely not the case. Although the media and press may paint the debate between food service managers and USDA regulations as the USDA pushing for nutritious, healthy meals for students while food service directors are stubbornly refusing to do so, the actual problem is that the industry of food services cannot sufficiently account for what the new regulations account for. Furthermore, the school districts I have spoken with definitely do not have the finances to support the new regulations. All of them have lost money last year. If that does not indicate that these school districts cannot financially sustain the new regulations, I am not sure what else to note. It is unfortunate that these school food service directors are too busy trying to fulfill the regulations that they just do not have the resources to even think about procuring local foods. However, it is in our best interest to still facilitate farm and school relationships in hopes that farm to school programs will be moving forward. That being said, we plan on comparing the data from the survey I have been distributing and a very similar one from 2010 to see if there has been any improvements in terms of farm to school programs for the last four years and identify what factors would encourage improvement.

Besides distributing the survey and speaking with food service directors, I have also been helping with the master food preservation classes my supervisor had Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. It was an incredible class with great, enthusiastic master preserver instructors. On Friday, we caught up with Dr. Wilkins over the phone in terms of the progress on the projects as well as any other updates and comments we had. We also discussed and collaborated on my preparation to meet with the food service manager at Skidmore Dining the following Monday and discuss their farm to school practices and local procurement.

Posted in **Assessing Potential for Scaling Up Farm to Cafeteria in Saratoga and Washington counties in New York State**

Week 1 and 2

Posted on **June 24, 2014** by **jl2895**

Week 1:

The first week of my internship with CCE was on campus under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Wilkins. During that week, Dr. Wilkins gave me multiple resources to give me a background on the Farm to School program and was an excellent mentor while I tried to absorb as much material as I could about the program from the USDA webinars, relevant papers and articles, and other informative guides. The USDA webinars are incredibly useful, and if anyone would like to look at them the website is: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/webinars>. Each day presented a new component to me about Farm to School and caused me to realize the complexity of the program with the various factors that need to be considered. After a full week of learning, I left for Saratoga County with my newly acquired knowledge and was slightly anxious about moving into a new environment.

Week 2:

My second week swept me off my feet with a whirlwind of events and so many new sights to take in. Right when I hit my desk I began contacting school food service directors to ask when they are available since the school was drawing to a close and many of them would be leaving soon for the summer. My supervisor, Diane Whitten, had many events that week ranging from the farmer's market on Wednesday to Fender Blender presentations all morning Thursday to speaking on WAMC Northeast Public Radio on Friday. For the farmer's market on Wednesday, I helped Ms. Whitten with making her samples of strawberry tarts that composed of baked wonton wrappers, jam, strawberries, and yogurt. The latter three were acquired from the farmer's market, and her samples definitely helped with the promotion of using local foods in dishes. On Thursday, Ms. Whitten was invited to present to classes of elementary school students on fueling their fitness wisely utilizing her fender blender, which was a bike that powered a blender. The children had a blast watching their teachers use the fender blender and learned all about choosing wisely when snacking or hydrating themselves. Friday consisted of a radio show at the WAMC studio in Albany, where Ms. Whitten discussed food preservation on air with fruit leather and homemade jam samples. With these many enlightening events on top of my efforts to contact food service directors, I had a busy week that was incredibly worthwhile.



- Diane Whitten preparing strawberry tarts for the farmer's market on Wednesday, June 18th at Saratoga Springs Farmer's Market



Fender Blender Presentation



— Food Friday at WAMC